

REACHING THE MOST MARGINALIZED GIRLS IN NEPAL: LESSONS LEARNT AND WAY FORWARD



Girls'
Education
Challenge



Foundation *for*
Development
Management

GIRLS EDUCATION CHALLENGE (GEC) PROJECTS IN NEPAL

Supporting the Education of Marginalized Girls in Kailali (STEM) I and STEM II

Mercy Corps _____

Highly marginalized girls from the Tharu community in Kailali district

TARGET: 5,000 GIRLS

Sisters for Sisters Education (SFS) I and SFS II

VSO _____

Highly marginalized girls from Surkhet, Parsa, Lamjung and Dhading

TARGET: 9,000+ GIRLS



Empowering a New Generation of Adolescent Girls with Education (ENGAGE)

VSO _____

Highly marginalized, out-of-school girls including those with disabilities in Banke, Sarlahi and Parsa

TARGET: 2,500+ GIRLS

Marginalized No More (MNM)

Street Child _____

Highly marginalized, Musahar girls from Province 2

TARGET: 7,500+ GIRLS

Aarambha

People in Need (PIN) _____

Married, out-of-school adolescent girls from the central Terai region

TARGET: 9,000+ GIRLS

FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT (FDM) AND GEC PROJECTS

Foundation for Development Management (FDM) is a Private Limited Company registered under the Company Act of Government of Nepal in 2000 as a development support organization. It has mandate to provide services such as research, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), capacity building and facilitation, institutional development, strategic planning and policy analysis. FDM's clients include public, private and NGO sector organizations seeking expertise in different development fields. Having served over **40 national and international clients**, FDM has successfully completed **100+ projects** since its establishment. It has **15 full-time** program staff, over **100 consultants** and a pool of enumerators spread over **67 districts** across the country.

OBJECTIVE OF FDM'S EVALUATION(S)

FDM conducted baseline, midline and endline evaluation of 4 of 5 GEC projects (apart from Marginalized No More project) in Nepal.

The mixed method evaluation entailed assessing the projects according to Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria by administering learning tests, household surveys, girls surveys, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with local elected representatives, community members, parents, School Management Committee (SMC) members etc.



WHAT WORKED?

1

Multi-pronged approach of engaging with variety of stakeholders

Although the GEC projects' goal was to improve the educational achievement of girls and increase their life chances, the projects did not engage only with the girls. Parents, teachers, local government stakeholders were equally engaged in project activities which played a big role in contributing to the success of the projects.

2

Innovative project activities

To meet their objectives, the projects did not limit themselves to mere awareness raising activities. A range of innovative activities ranging from mentoring approach, bridge classes, community learning centres to formation of community management committee were implemented. Such activities were crucial in helping the projects meet their desired target.

3

Provision of wide array of transition options for beneficiaries

The GEC projects provided its beneficiaries with multiple transition pathways. The marginalized girls had the option of re-joining school or taking part in a training and starting an enterprise. Some of the girls were even provided with loans or some of funding to initiate businesses. FDM found that this flexibility helped girls choose a transition pathway of their choice and did not make them feel constrained. This was an important and a successful aspect of all GEC projects.

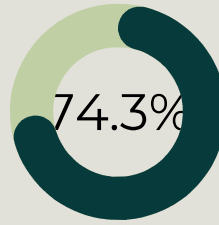


IMPROVED LEARNING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

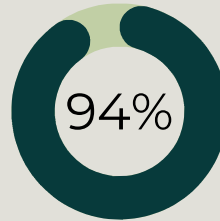
One of the foremost impacts of the GEC projects was on the learning skills of the beneficiary girls. FDM's evaluation showed that in all the projects, the girls experienced an improvement in their learning evidenced through improved performance in foundational skill tests such as Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Early Grade Mathematical Assessment (EGMA) and Annual Status of Education Report (ASER).

Girls now have improved reading, mathematical and problem solving skills. This has been possible through an improved learning environment - at home, school and in the community. More parents have been allowing their daughters to re-continue education, giving them more time to study at home and lessening household chores. Schools have become more mindful about creating gender friendly environment and teachers are better capacitated and have improved pedagogy skills.

Along with learning scores, girls have increased confidence, better self-efficacy and are more vocal. This has increased their access to jobs and improved their life chances.



74.3% of the girls experienced successful transition to school in Aarambha's Cohort 3 Endline Evaluation



In SFS - II, 94% of the total target beneficiary of 5,877 in-school girls had experienced successful transition.

ACCESS

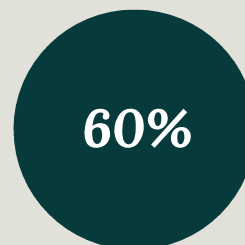
Apart from learning, GEC projects played a crucial role in increasing girls' access to education.

Bridging course, Community Learning Centres (CLCs), Girls Club (GCs) etc. played a big role in continuation, retention and helping girls re-join schools.

The projects also improved access by helping schools become gender friendly, child friendly and disability friendly.



In the Aarambha project area, out of the 46 cases of planned child marriage, Gauna and GBV, 32 were addressed by the project

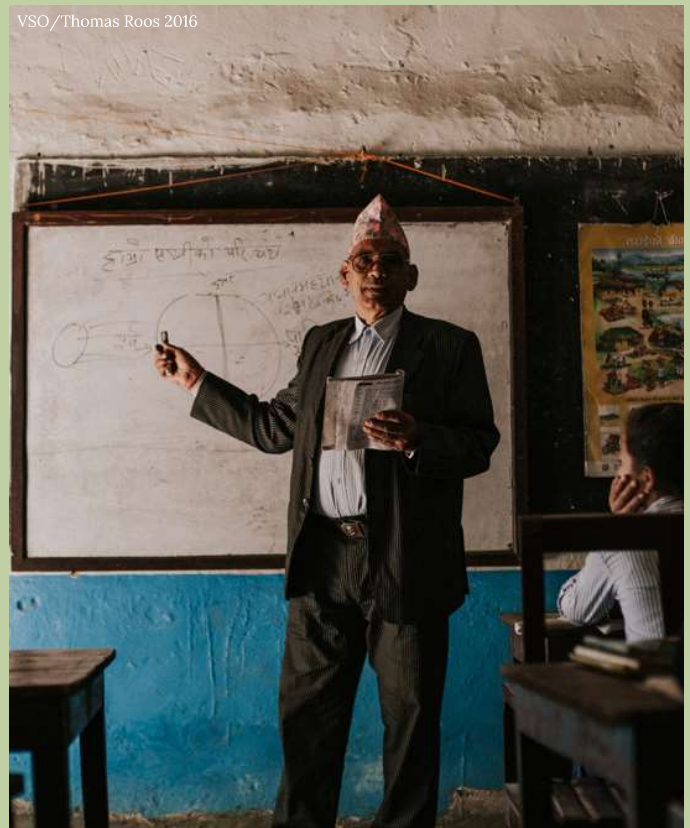


Over 60% of schools where the ENGAGE project had been implemented had accessible infrastructure for children with disability. The figure was only 3% before the project began.

QUALITY

GEC projects were found to have been very effective in helping improve the quality of schools and teachers. The teachers were found to have developed child-friendly teaching skills while schools had become more responsive to the needs of girls and children with disability.

An example of more responsive school administration was seen in the implementation of Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM). The project had encouraged schools to set up CRM boxes and address the complaints received.



A result of such interventions was seen clearly in FDM's evaluation. For instance, in ENGAGE schools, teachers' were found to be practising learner centered classroom management and organization, using gender neutral languages and disability friendly languages. While only **38.46%** of teachers / educators displayed learner-centered classroom practices in ENGAGE project's baseline, the number had risen to **64.31%** at endline.

While quality had undoubtedly improved in GEC supported schools, there is a need for school stakeholders to understand their role in ensuring quality of their schools. This was most particularly seen in the implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs), which the project had encouraged the schools to formulate/update and implement.



SUSTAINABILITY

With the formation of the Girls Inclusive Education Network (GIEN), there are strong indications suggesting that the achievements of the project will continue well beyond the projects' lives.

GIEN is project's strategic approach to support Nepal Government's aim towards inclusive and equitable access to education, especially for marginalised girls. The major aim of network is to work together with the government and communities to promote girls' right to education, life skills and livelihood through creation of enabling environments at family, communities, and schools.

The structure of the networks varies according to the projects but all of them hold the fundamental objective of supporting girls' education, advocating for operationalization of CRM in schools, ensuring gender friendly environment for girls and mainstreaming gender policies in close coordination with the local authorities.

The networks also aim to raise awareness at the community to eliminate harmful social norms like early marriage and gender-based discriminations ultimately empowering marginalized girls to continue their education and learning. In the long run, these networks will support in addressing girls' educational and leadership barriers thereby enabling them to access opportunities in more sustained way.